A Ruined Nestorian City in Inner Mongolia

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A RUINED NESTORIAN CITY IN INNER MONGOLIA

OWEN LATTIMORE

THE Ongut or Onggot tribe,[1] a Nestorian Christian people to the north-west of Peiping, mentioned by both Marco Polo and John of Montecorvino[2] in the thirteenth century, offer one of the most important minor problems of Central Asian and Mongol history, and of the history of the Great Wall frontier of China. It may be that new light can be thrown on this problem by the discovery of a ruined city, containing Nestorian relics, a few miles east of the great Mongol lama monastery commonly called Pailingmiao. This temple stands about 100 miles north-west of Kweihwa, in the province of Suiyüan, and is therefore near the northern fringe of the territory that has long been known as the domain of the Ongut tribe. In this territory, and probably in the southern part of it, near the modern Kweihwa, stood the city which Marco Polo called Tenduc; and from it came the "prince George" whom John of Montecorvino converted from the Nestorian heresy.

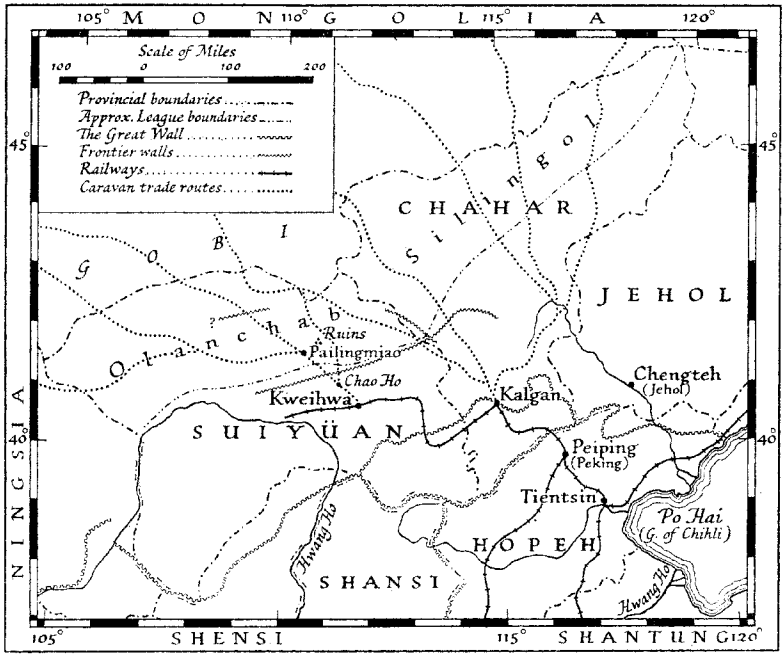
The ruined city which I came upon in 1932 lies in the famous grazing grounds of Pailingmiao and close to the most frequented east-and-west route between the Mongol regions north of Kweihwa and those north of Kalgan. The country has been traversed repeatedly by recent travellers, and it is therefore by pure accident that the city has not previously been noticed. In my own case, I actually heard of the ruins before visiting them, and went there because of the stories I had heard. It was while travelling with one Mongol companion, with no particular destination in mind, being engaged primarily in studying the Mongol technique of caravan travel, that I began to hear stories of the wife of a Mongol noble, who had been "possessed" by the spirit who was "lord" of the ruined city. The noble in question was the Jön (written form, Jegun) Beise, or East Beise of Khalkha Right Wing Banner, who had taken bricks from the ruined city to build himself a "palace" a few miles away. I give the story in its fullest version, one which I heard some time later:

The Jön Beise, less than a year before my visit, took cart-loads of bricks to build himself a house. Shortly after this, his wife became possessed of a *chitgur*, a demon or spirit. She turned in the night and abused her husband—this being the demon speaking through her mouth—for robbing the ruins. Her husband called lamas and had prayers read to restore her. The *chitgur* was Khureng or Khurum Bator, the Blackavised Hero, servant of Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan, Blind Liu-tzu Khan, the Lord of the ruined city. The contest between Khureng Bator and the lamas was indecisive, so he returned to his master. Then Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan himself became a *chitgur* and entered into the Khatun, the Lady or wife of the Beise, and said, through her mouth,

[1] See Paul Pelliot, "Chrétiens d'Asie centrale et d'Extrême-Orient," *T'oung Pao*, Leyden, 1914. Professor Pelliot traces the Ongut to southern Kansu, prior to their establishment in the Kweihwa region. This may well indicate a Turkic affinity, comparable to that of the Salars of Kansu.

[2] The most convenient general reference is in Yule's 'The Book of Ser Marco Polo,' ed. Cordier, 3rd edition, London, 1921.

to the Beise: "I am Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan, Lord of the ruined city. What do you mean by taking bricks from my city? You are a Beise, you think; a great man, a *noyan* or official, and you can do what you like. But you are only a great man of to-day, and perhaps yesterday and perhaps to-morrow. I am the Lord of this city and this land, and have been for over seven hundred years. I have tens of thousands of souls under my rule, and over them are several *chiang-chun* or marshals [a Chinese word, but frequently used by Mongols] and two Heroes; Khureng Bator [also sometimes called Khara Bator, Black Hero][1] and Chagan Bator, White Hero. [These colours, in a Mongol story, indicate the principles of evil and good respectively, and the dualism, in this particular instance, sounds like a faint Manichaean echo.] The souls of the people of



Position of Nestorian ruins

my city have for hundreds of years been only frogs and snakes; but do you not suppose that they are still souls? Seven hundred years is a long time, and do you not suppose that they want to change? [I surmise that this is a threat to loose all the souls upon the land.] The lamas of Bato Khalakh-in Sume[2] also took bricks from my city; but first they said prayers. That was all right. A brick is only a brick, and anybody can take a brick. But these bricks of mine are made of no ordinary earth. That earth came from very far away, and is as

[1] Cf. the story of a somewhat similar Khara Bator Djandjyn (i.e. *chiangchun*) connected with the ruins of Khara Khota (Marco Polo's Etsina), by Henning Haslund, in "Mongol," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, London, July 1934.

[2] The true Mongol name of Pailingmiao; see below.

precious as silver. [In other words, the "magic" of the bricks should have been taker

' e spoke to the Beise for several nights, in the person of the Beise's Khatun—who, in her proper self, knew nothing about it all. The prayers of the lamas had no effect. At last the Beise invited a *gurteng* or *gurtum* lama: a kind of sorcerer who preserves much of the old primitive shamanism of the Mongols, in a form modified by the Lama-Buddhist Church. The *gurteng* made them clean the whole place and prepare it for a great feast. Then they made ready special food and delicacies, which cost them a great deal, and a valuable present for the *gurteng*. (Such a present is regarded as a present to the spirit itself.) Then they sat down to the feast, and the afflicted Khatun ate a good deal (that was the spirit eating), and afterwards the *gurteng* rose and said to the spirit that he hoped he had enjoyed the feast, and that he must now desire to return to his home; and they wished him well. Then the *chitgur* left the Khatun, and she had not been ghost-possessed since.

The stories of this business had reverberated all through Inner Mongolia—making it, incidentally, much easier to find out other stories about the city. It had been taken so seriously that there was even a proposal that the Panch'en Lama, who was then making a "progress" through Inner Mongolia, should be given a very large public offering and asked to exorcise the frog and snake population of the city, either by prayers enabling them to be born again as higher animals, or as men, or by causing them to remove to some other place. After hearing some of the stories I asked to see the city, and my Mongol companion took me there without any difficulty. All my photographs of the ruins, and my notes of legends and stories, have been put at the disposal of Professor Paul Pelliot, who is by far the most eminent authority on the whole subject, and can best discuss its historical significance. In the following account I shall merely describe the position of the city, give the legends, and say something about the general principles of the historical geography of the region; for the ruined frontier walls and fortified cities of Inner Mongolia, in their relation to the Great Wall of China, are of the highest importance in studying the correspondence between racial and political and physical geography, which for centuries has been extraordinarily close all along this immensely important frontier.

The city of Kweihwa stands in a plain enclosed on the north by the Inner Mongolian plateau and on the south by the mountains of Shansi province. The plain is therefore a kind of tidal reach, into which have flowed alternately Chinese from the south and nomadic peoples from the north, of whom the Mongols were the latest. At times—especially when the nomads were in the ascendant—there has been a tendency to compromise, with Chinese trading towns and farming settlements flourishing under nomad rule. At a distance of only 3 or 4 miles north of Kweihwa the great caravan route, whose branches run to Outer Mongolia, Chinese Turkistan, and the Moslem Pale of Kansu province, enters the frontal hills of the plateau. It crosses a pass called the Wu-kung Pa, a Chinese name translated as Centipede Pass, which may however be a corruption of a Mongol name. The pass is a double one; after reaching the first crest, the road descends abruptly and then makes a long ascent. At the second "crest" there is no further drop; the road leads out on

to the open, rolling Mongolian plateau. The distance from Kweihwa is about 30 miles.

For another 40 or 50 miles north from the rim of the plateau the Mongol pastures have been colonized by Chinese. The front of colonization is not everywhere equally advanced, but is roughly governed by "economic distance" from the railway, for which the maximum, in regions where motor transport has not become important, is about 100 miles. Colonization has advanced farther to the north of Kalgan (reached by the railway in 1909) than it has to the north of Kweihwa (reached by the railway in 1921), owing very largely to the longer operation of the economic stimulus introduced by the railway. In both regions colonization has noticeably receded in recent years, chiefly because of the decline of railway trade, as the result of civil wars, but also because of successive years of drought or cold, and in some regions because of the destruction and blowing away of the topsoil, where land that should never have been brought under cultivation has been "massacred" by the plough. The front of colonization also varies according to local conditions: where watered valleys can be reached, the Chinese farmers tend to penetrate earlier and to adventure farther north.

About 60 miles from Kweihwa by road, on the main caravan route, there is a kind of embayment where the advance of

l / the existence of an important Mongol religious foundation, commonly known to the Chinese as Chao Ho or Temple River, and to the Mongols as Shiretu Jo. Mongol lamaseries generally have two names, one being the place-name and one the formal title of the religious foundation. Very frequently there is also a "jargon" name, used by caravan men and Chinese traders who speak a broken Mongol; and this, unfortunately, is the name most likely to be recorded by travellers. Chao Ho is a jargon name, being derived from the Chinese pronunciation, *chao*, of the Mongol, or rather Tibetan, word *jo*, a temple, compounded with the Chinese word *ho*, a river. Shiretu (written form, Siregetu) Jo is the Mongol place-name, meaning Table Temple, or Temple on the Table-land. The word *jo* is a Tibetan loan-word which entered the Mongol language with Lama-Buddhism.[1] This temple domain, only about 10 miles square, is important as being the northernmost Tumet Mongol territory; between it and the Kweihwa plain, almost all of the Tumets have been swept out by Chinese colonization. The Tumets once held all the land from Kweihwa northward to this line. The original trading town of Kweihwa was built at the end of the sixteenth century by a Tumet prince, as his "capital," and received the name of Kweihwa, meaning Return to Civilization, as a kind of compliment from the Chinese, when the Tumets desisted from an attack on Peiping.[2]

The Tumets have suffered heavily from Chinese colonization, which began to affect the Kweihwa plain in the eighteenth century, under Manchu rule. There are now only a few thousands of the Tumets, most of whom live on

[1] W. W. Rockhill, 'Diary of a Journey through Mongolia and Tibet, 1891–92,' Washington, 1894.

[2] Owen Lattimore, 'The Mongols of Manchuria,' New York, 1934; with references to the 'Meng-ku Yu-mu Chi,' or 'Record of the Mongol Pastures' (preface dated 1859), and to J. F. Baddeley, 'Russia, Mongolia, China,' London, 1919.

irrigated land at the foot of the plateau escarpment. They live partly in separate villages and partly in mixed villages of Tumets and Chinese, but have lost their language and live like Chinese. Later colonization, stimulated by the railway, affected the Tumets of the plateau even more suddenly and drastically, almost wiping them out. A few hundred of them who yet retain the Mongol language are still scattered through the mountains between plain and plateau; and a few hundred more remain in the Shiretu Jo temple domain. Such temple lands are, by origin, set aside from tribal lands. They are under the ecclesiastical rule of the religious foundation, not under tribal rule, and the lay Mongols living in them are "subjects" not of prince or tribe, but of the Church. There are said to be ruins and even inscribed stones within this temple dome in which may possibly, from the desc
l old-Turkish runes. Temple sites in Mongolia may often (like so many Moslem shrines) inherit the sanctity of earlier religions. It is not impossible that there is an ethnic continuity between the Tumet Mongols and the Nestorian Ongut, and that modern sites like Kweihwa and Shiretu Jo may be on, or close to, sites that were important in the thirteenth century. A ruined city called T'o-k'e-t'o, near Kweihwa, has been suggested as the site of the Tenduc of Marco Polo.[1] The name T'o-k'e-t'o or Tokoto is obviously the Chinese corruption of a non-Chinese name.

The temple domain of Shiretu Jo is watered by a small stream flowing toward the mountains, the Kweihwa plain, and the Hwang Ho. Its northern boundary is a watershed, not easily obvious to the eye, but important as the dividing line between Yellow River drainage and the inland drainage of the Mongolian plateau. Here one leaves the almost obliterated territory of the Tumets and enters that of Khalkha Right Wing Banner, popularly known as Darkhan Beile Hoshio, or Banner of the Independent Beile, from the title of honour of its ruling prince. This Banner, as can be seen from its name, is of Outer Mongolian origin. It was founded by Mongols who migrated from Central Outer Mongolia in the seventeenth century, as a result of quarrels between their own princes, and acknowledged Manchu overlordship on entering Inner Mongolia. They form part of the Olanchab (written form, Olaganchab) League of Inner Mongolia, and are thus distinguished from the Tumets both tribally and by political organization; for the Tumets were not included within any of the Leagues of Inner Mongolia, but were placed by the Manchus under a special form of administration, something like that of the Chahar Mongols.

The territory of the Khalkha Right Wing Banner, according to the 'Meng-ku Yu-mu Chi,' or 'Record of the Mongol Pastures,' extends for 120 *li* or about 40 miles from east to west, and for 130 *li* or about 43 miles from north to south. On the north it borders Outer Mongolia, on the east the Durbet Khukhet tribe (or Banner) of Olanchab League, and on the west the Minggan, usually called Mo (written form Mago) Minggan, tribe or Banner, also of Olanchab League. From 10 to 20 per cent. of the Banner territory has been colonized by Chinese, but the Mongols themselves are pastoral and have not, like the majority of the Tumets, taken to agriculture. The frontier between them and the Chinese is therefore an economic and cultural frontier as well as one of

[1] Yule and Cordier, *loc. cit.*; also Pelliot, *loc. cit.*

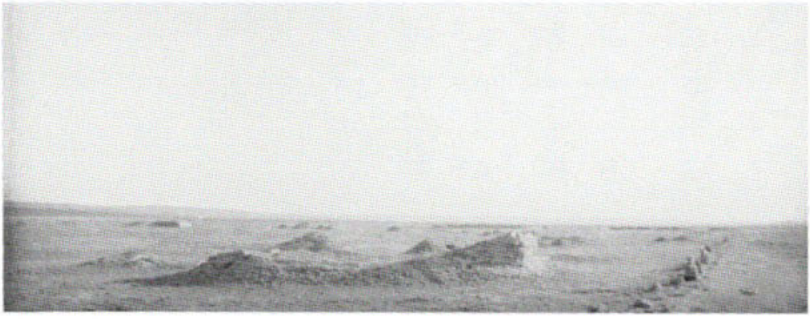
race and language. The Mongols of Olanchab and those of Silingol (the next Inner Mongolian League to the east) have recently started a movement for autonomous self-government, and have demanded guarantees against further Chinese colonization. Olanchab League is nominally a part of the Chinese province of Suiyüan, and Silingol nominally belongs to the province of Chahar; but both of them are bands of pure Mongol territory lying in the north of the Chinese provinces. In practice, the hereditary Mongol princes send representatives down to the Chinese provincial capitals to represent them in
ɔn over Mongol affairs. No Chinese officials enter the Mo
dminister or rule the Mongols, and Chinese control is measured in practice by the rate of Chinese encroachment through colonization, which drives out the Mongols and replaces them with Chinese.

Between 30 and 40 miles from the nearest Chinese colonization, and about 120 miles from Kweihwa, on the main caravan road, stands the temple domain of Pailingmiao. This is the temple that has recently been made the "capital" of the autonomous movement undertaken by the allied Leagues of Olanchab and Silingol. The temple domain has for many years been the most important pasture ground of the Kweihwa trading caravans. Camels are conditioned here for two or three months every year in between journeys from Kweihwa to Chinese Turkistan.[1] The name Pailingmiao is jargon, *miao* being Chinese for "temple," and *Pailing* a corruption of the Mongol Beile-in, meaning "of the Beile," the hereditary prince of the Banner. The Mongol place-name of the temple is Bato Khalagha-on Sume, or colloquially Bato Khalakh-in Sume, Temple of the Firm Defence. The name is explained in the following Mongol legend:

The Mongols of this Banner migrated to their present territory from the Tushetu (Tushiyetu) Khan region of Central Outer Mongolia, in the reign of Shun Chih (1644–1662), the first Manchu Emperor to rule in Peiping. When they had been settled in their new territory for some time they decided to build a lama monastery. This they did; but they forgot to tell the Manchu Emperor, whose overlordship they had now recognized. The news gradually travelled to Peiping, and the Ejen Khan, the Manchu Overlord, was very angry to hear that a new temple had been built without his leave first having been petitioned. He therefore ordered a certain river to destroy the temple. Then began a contest between the river and the lamas of the new temple. The river set out from the water-parting already mentioned, between Shiretu Jo and Bato Khalakh-in Sume, and approached the temple. The prayers of the lamas checked it; whereupon, making a great loop, it approached the temple from a new direction. Again the lamas halted it with their prayers, and it turned away east, defeated. The river, for this reason, is still called Aibagh-in Gol, or River of Fear, while the lamasery is called Temple of the Firm Defence. This explanation of the name of the river, which refers it to the root of the verb *ayona* (written form, *ayomoi*), may of course be no more than popular etymology. It may in fact be a corruption of some other word. I believe that Mongol stories of this kind may reflect the old and strong feeling that the Mongols were only auxiliary subjects or allies of the Manchus, not subjects by conquest,

[1] See Owen Lattimore, 'The Desert Road to Turkestan,' London and Boston, 1927–28.

The Jirgalei Obo, or Rank of Obos, from the north



General view of ruins: northern wall in foreground

Rectangular ruined mound in the city

One of the largest mounds in the city

Detail of carved stone crosses

One of the larger crosses, with head of slab set slightly off centre

Carving on stones similar to those with crosses

and echo the covert struggle that went on, during the rule of the Manchus, to maintain the realities of Mongol separatism. According to another Mongol story, curiously similar to this one, the city of Peiping itself stands "askew" because a Manchu Emperor once cast doubts on the power of one of the great Mongol Living Buddhas, in the Uliassutai (Oliyasotai) region of Western Mongolia. The Living Buddha then sent a river all the way from Outer Mongolia, which began to wash away the city of Peiping, leaving it standing slightly "aslant" and

It is in the valley of the Aibagh-in Gol that the Nestorian ruins are to be found. I have already mentioned, in the story of the ghost-possession of the Beile's wife, the tradition that bricks were "mined" from the ruins for the building of Bato Khalakh-in Sume. It is possible indeed that the temple, as a holy site, stands heir to the Nestorian city, and is older than the eighteenth-century establishment of the Mongols of the Banner. There may be a similar correspondence between the site of Kweihwa and the ruined city of T'o-k'e-t'o or Toghto. A slight change of position, of this kind, may mean that an effort was made to get away from any baleful influences that might be hanging around after the destruction of a celebrated place, while remaining near enough to carry on the old prestige and make use of the same geographical advantages.

I am not sure of the distance between Bato Khalakh-in Sume and the Nestorian city, as I have never made the direct ride between the two places; but I do not believe it is more than 10 or 15 miles. The city stands on the north bank of the "river," which is only a few inches deep and no bigger than a brook, at a point where another valley opens from the north. East of the city, at the junction of the two valleys, there is a jagged hill called the Agot Ol (written form, Agoot Agola) or Hill of Caves, from which the northern valley is known as the Agot Ol-in Gol. To the south, across the stream and on the far rim of the valley, there is a great *obo* or cairn, flanked by two rows of small *obos*—a not uncommon style. The dark, grey-black colour of both the great *obo* and the smaller ones is flecked with glinting white, from fragments of quartz among the loosely piled rocks. The quartz comes from an outcrop on the hill, and as it is the only white rock visible in the landscape, the brightness of the cairns is all the more distinct. White is the "good" and also the magical colour of the Mongols, and I assume that the gleam of white is associated by them with the legend of the *obos*. The whole line of cairns, with the great one in the centre, is known as the Jirgalei Obo, or Rank of Obos. The first story that I heard about them is as follows:

The ruins are those of an anciently powerful city, of Mongols and Chinese together, "like Kweihwa." Its enemies were strong, but never strong enough to take it. Then arose an enemy who was an Ejen Khan, or Overlord Emperor, somewhere, whose name was Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan, or Blind Liu-tzu Khan. He came in the night, and in one night built this row of *obos*, like soldiers, which by magic destroyed the city. According to most of the legends however Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan was Lord of the city itself, not its destroyer, and it was destroyed by "somebody else—perhaps the Moslems." As a matter of fact, the cairns may well have been built originally to "take the curse off" the site of the ruined city, after it was ruined; this would fit in well with Mongol ideas of geomancy. The mention of the Moslems however is interesting, as they are

to-day still influential in the Kweihwa plain. They are in touch through the upper Yellow River Valley with the Moslem Pale in Kansu province, and by caravan with the Turki Moslems of Chinese Turkistan. Undoubtedly their communities were founded by non-Chinese immigrants, not by Chinese converts. Moslem penetration into

ith that of the Nestorians, Manichaeans, and so forth; and it is more than probable that when these faiths declined, many of their adherents were absorbed by Islam.

West of the line of cairns there is a valley opening into the main valley from the south, the Kherei Gol or Crow Valley. A hill at its mouth is called the Sibe, or Gate. My Mongol companion, who was not a local man but a Jakhchin Ölöt from the distant Altai in Outer Mongolia, remarked off-hand that the name Kherei, locally rendered as the name of a kind of crow, might in reality refer to the Kheriet tribe of the Altai region in the time of Chingghis Khan—the very tribe, ethnically intermediate between Turks and Mongols, which was largely responsible for the spread of Nestorian influences under the Mongol Empire. It was this tribe which was associated with the Central Asian legend of Prester John. There is possibly a link between this tribe and the present Kirei Kazaks of the Altai, who are nomadic Central Asian Turks, and Moslems by religion.[1] The identification of the name of a hill with an ancient tribe is of course purely speculative; but it was interesting to have the speculation made by a Mongol, who himself knew nothing of Nestorian Christianity.

The city itself is known as Yisun Sume-in Tor, Ruins of Nine Temples, and sometimes as Olan Sume-in Tor, Ruins of Many Temples. It mea
roughly, about a quarter of a mile from east to west, and rather less than that from north to south. It is therefore, in size, more like a fortified post than a city. The original walled city of Kweihwa however (the walls of which have now been almost entirely destroyed) was not much larger; although its gate-fortifications were much more formidable, and its walls more massive. The walls of the ruined city are best preserved on the north and west, and almost obliterated on the east and south, toward the Agot Ol-in Gol and Aibagh-in Gol; perhaps by water action in years of flood. The walls were marked by vertical fissures at regular intervals, which indicated that they had been built by making hollow sections of planks, between which the earth was stamped down until it solidified: a method still common in China. I was not able to see whether the walls had ever been faced with brick.

Within the city are numbers of mounds, the ruins of buildings remarkable in size for so small a city. Most of these rubble-heaps had a rectangular outline, but some of them had a rounded base. Judging from their size, they are more likely to have been palaces, religious buildings, and public offices than private houses. The mounds had been deeply trenched into by men "mining" for bricks, and recent trenches, together with cart tracks leading out of the city, showed how bricks had been taken away for building the palace of the Jön Beise. Besides these open cuts, a number of holes and tunnels proved that treasure-seekers had been at work. The bricks used in the buildings were larger than those normally used by the Chinese in building houses, and comparable to those used in building city walls and important public structures.

[1] Douglas Carruthers, 'Unknown Mongolia,' London, 1913.

Many of them were marked with a hand-imprint—whether a religious symbol or a mason's or contractor's mark, I do not know. The fingers and thumb, in this hand-imprint, were not outspread but close and parallel, like the Red Hand of Ulster. Stonework did not appear to have been used except for foundations and ground-courses.

The most remarkable thing in the city however which immediately drew my attention, was a collection of six or seven stone sl[illegible] ...rved decorative work. Several of these were lying singly, and may have been near their original positions. Others had been gathered into groups—obviously not because they fitted together, but because of their similarity. There may have been still others—I did not go over the whole of the ruins. The slabs that I saw—and I photographed all of them that I could—bore crosses of the kind well known as "Nestorian," similar in design to the bronze crosses that are found in many parts of Inner Mongolia, in the Kweihwa plain, and in the Ordos desert.[1] No slab was marked with more than one cross, and the cross was always at one end of the slab, the rest of which was usually marked with decorative designs. Several of the stones were bevelled on one long edge, so that the end-section had the following shape: ⌂. The flat or squared edges of such stones, opposite the bevelled edge, were socketed; and the cross at the end, instead of being centred with the axial line of the slab, was noticeably out of centre. Thus they were evidently not simple monoliths, to be set up on end, but parts of a design—conceivably the front of a Nestorian church. If this be true, then the church must have been an important building in so small a city. The stones averaged between 4 and 5 feet in length.

Tiles and fragments of pottery were not especially plentiful among the ruins. Two large pieces of white marble were conspicuous, carved with the conventional Chinese dragon. On one of them were half each of the Chinese characters *Chou* and *Shang*—the names of two "classical" dynasties older than the Christian era. The carving, it need hardly be said, was not contemporary with these ancient dynasties, but must have been part of a sententious, conventional inscription, with historical or literary allusions, in the pedantic tradition associated with Chinese public monuments.

Further evidence of specifically Chinese influence appeared outside the eastern wall of the city, in what had evidently been an important suburb. This kind of suburb is a common mark of walled cities in the frontier regions—notably Chinese Turkistan—as well as in China proper. The closing of the city gates at night makes it convenient for inns to be built outside the gates, in order to get the trade of late-arriving travellers. This, in turn, promotes the growth of market-places outside the city. In a trans-frontier city of this kind moreover it is likely that the city itself was reserved for the tribal princes and their following, while the suburb was allotted to resident Chinese merchants and visiting caravan traders. The Mongol city of Urga (now Olan Bator, or, in the written form, Olagan Bagator) is, for instance, entirely distinct from the Maimaich'eng or Chinese trading quarter. The specifically Chinese monuments in the east suburb were a stone tortoise, which had once borne on

[1] See Paul Pelliot, "Sceaux-amulettes de bronze avec croix et colombes provenant de la boucle du Fleuve Jaune," in *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, vol. 7, 1931. Also Mark W. Brown, "The Romance of Nestorian Crosses," in *The Chinese Recorder*, February 1933.

its back an inscribed tablet: two lions, of the kind that stand at the gates of important buildings, and two figures of officials, of the kind that not infrequently guard the approach to a tomb. The heads of both human figures were missing, and it could be seen that one of them had been chiselled off; both had probably been taken away for sale to Chinese dealers, together with the tablet from the back of the tortoise. All of these monuments were of comparatively poor and obviously "provincial" workmanship.

This completed my survey of the city. The *obos*, several miles away, I had visited the day before. The hastiness of the inspection was due to trouble with my camels. They had been stampeded the evening before, and had been lost all night; they might have been lost altogether, had it not been for the skill in tracking of my Mongol companion. Camels that have been badly scared are hard to handle for some days, being subject to fresh panics. We were in a hurry to get them out into "clean," open ground, with nothing to scare them. The Mongol and I were each riding one camel and leading another; they were hard to hold, snorting and trembling and shying as they went among the ruins, and it took all the strength and skill of the Mongol to manage them while I dismounted and photographed. I could of course have camped at a distance and come back for a more thorough inspection; but I am not an archaeologist, and there was no point in inviting the suspicion of being a "treasure-seeker."

As we rode on from the city we passed the Agot Ol, the Hill of Caves already mentioned, which overlooks the city from the east. This hill is a comparatively abrupt, jutting head, conspicuous among the more rounded hills of the landscape. One edge of it, seen from the west, had something the profile of a human face, about two-thirds of the way up. The hill is pitted with caves, and I suspect that it contained important shrines at the time when the city flourished. It is said now to be full of snakes—probably adders, which in a place like this are considered holy by the Mongols. I found on the face of the hill one main ledge, behind which the rock had been cut away to a deep corner, while the ledge itself had been levelled up with large bricks. Many of the caves also had been artificially enlarged. I could not find a trace of statuary, plaster, or fresco; but in one cave there was a heap of small baked-clay objects, called *tsats* by the Mongols. These are lama-Buddhist cult-objects, and may be miniatures of the monuments variously called *chorten*, *dagoba*, and, in Mongolia, *soborgan*. When found in a place like this, it means that they have been "offered," in propitiation of a haunting spirit that is feared.

I have already given the story which described Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan as the destroyer of the city. This however is a variant. Most of the stories affirm that Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan was not the destroyer of the city, but "a Mongol of the Yüan dynasty" (which ruled over China from 1260 to 1368). He was lord of the city, and married a daughter of the (Mongol) Emperor. He then plotted to seize the throne, but his wife betrayed him to her father, who sent the troops that destroyed the city.

By far the most complete account however was one which I heard several weeks later and far to the east, from a Chahar Mongol. This was not surprising, because the recent activity of the ghosts within the city had caused tales to be remembered and repeated all over Inner Mongolia. The story runs as follows: In the time of T'ang (the T'ang dynasty, A.D. 618–907—this dynasty was

founded on an alliance with the Turks who dominated the north-western frontiers of China, and under its rule not only Nestorian Christianity but Islam, Mazdaism, Manichaeism, and other faiths of the Near and Middle East penetrated from Central Asia into China proper) a Chinese came through this part of Inner Mongolia, spying out the land, and saw a place that pleased him. Now at that time Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan was a simple commoner, called Liu-tzu. The T'ang man said to him: "I recognize this place as a special place, but I must make a test. I shall plant a stake in the ground here, and attach a long cord to it. You stay by the stake, and I shall go over the mountain with the cord. You watch and see, when I tug the cord, if the stake comes out."

So he went off, and Liu-tzu Khan watched by the stake. When the T'ang man tugged, the stake came out. But Liu-tzu Khan picked it up and planted it again, for he realized that the T'ang man was up to something special, and if there were any profit in it, he wanted that profit for himself. The T'ang man came back, and was disappointed. "No," said Liu-tzu Khan, "the stake never budged." "Strange," said the T'ang man; "I wonder if I can have b aken in recognizing this place. But I shall make another test." Then he put a hen's egg in the ground. His idea was to see if the egg hatched out in the night; but Liu-tzu Khan crept up in the night and found the egg, which indeed had hatched out. Liu-tzu Khan again realized that this was an omen which the T'ang man wanted, so he took away the hatched egg and the chicken and planted a "good-for-nothing" egg instead. In the morning, the T'ang man looked and was much disappointed. "That egg ought to have hatched out," he said. "Well, there is nothing for it. I must have made a mistake in my geomancy. This land is no good after all." Then they sat and talked for a while, and Liu-tzu Khan asked, "What special virtue was it you thought you had recognized in this land?" The T'ang man said: "If the land had been what I thought it was, it would have been such a place that, if a man buried his father and mother there when they died, he would have become Emperor. However, there is nothing for it; it is no good."

Then the T'ang man went away; but Liu-tzu Khan waited until his father and mother died, and buried them there: and sure enough, he became Emperor. When the T'ang man heard of this, he realized he had been tricked, and was furious. From his own home he shot an arrow, and it flew until it hit Liu-tzu Khan in one eye, and blinded him in that eye; and that is how he became Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan, Blind Liu-tzu Khan.[1] Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan's proper destiny was to reign as Ejen Khan or Emperor for eighteen years; but he made of every day a new-year's day, "just like Yüan Shih-k'ai when he changed the calendar; for did not Yüan Shih-k'ai shorten his destiny in the same manner?" And so his eighteen years were transformed into eighteen days, and his reign ended.

This story I heard from a lama, and a friend of his who prompted him with a few details. I found that neither man knew the names of any dynasties except T'ang (618–907), Yüan (1260–1368), Ming (1368–1644), and Ch'ing

[1] It is important to note here that while *sokhor* in the modern vernacular means merely "blind," and is so noted also in Kowalewski's Mongol-Russian-French Dictionary (Kazan, 1849; recently reproduced in Peiping in a photostat edition), I am told by Professor Pelliot that the original meaning is "blind in one eye."

(1644–1911). The dynasties, some of them Chinese and some "barbarian" by origin, between the T'ang and the Yüan or Mongol dynasty, had dropped out. This may be explained by the fact that the T'ang dynasty, which had important Central Asian Turkish affinities, was one of the truly great dynasties of the Mongolian frontier, and was never displaced in frontier legend by the Sung dynasty (Northern Sung, 960–1127; Southern Sung, 1127–1279), which was not only of Chinese origin, but always had a noticeable Southern Chinese, non-frontier affiliation. The so-called Five Dynasties (907–960) which filled in the fifty-four troubled years between the fall of the T'ang and the establishment of the Sung were too short-lived to be remembered in legend as distinct nations, although it is quite possible that some of the warriors of the period may have survived as folk-tale heroes. The Liao (907–1125) and Chin (1115–1234) dynasties also, though of great importance in Mongol legend, are not of primary importance, because they were of Manchurian origin, and are thus regarded as cognate forerunners of the Mongols themselves, rather than as major participants in the eternal opposition of Mongols and Chinese.

The magical details of the stories here given I cannot explain; but it is worth pointing out that the arrow shot from a distance is reminiscent of a story about the fixing of the border between Mongols and Chinese by an arrow shot (or pretended to have been shot) by Erh Lang, the second of the Eight Lang, or "Noble Youths," who are folk-heroes of the Chinese wars against the frontier barbarians. From this incident is said to come the name of the Lang Shan, a range in Western Inner Mongolia.[1] This in turn brings up the speculation that the name of Liu-tzu Khan may be a Mongol corruption of the name of Liu-Lang, the sixth of the eight hero-brothers, whose family or clan name is said to have been Yang. In this case the form Liu-tzu would be a diminutive, employed in a distinctly un-Chinese manner through Mongol ignorance of Chinese usage.

From the stories about Sokhor Liu-tzu Khan it is however evident that he was neither clearly Mongol nor clearly Chinese. Both Chinese and "barbarian" elements are mingled in the legends, as they are in the ruins of the trans-frontier city. In other words, it is fair to assume that both Khan and city belonged to one of those intermediate frontier peoples marking the division between true Chinese and true Mongols, who have been so potent in the history of the frontier. The legends are of a character which probably reflects a type of history rather than a specific period, and they may well therefore embody the confused echoes of several similar periods and chieftains whose careers were homologous.

In so far as the legends may refer directly to the Ongut however it is legitimate to comment on the curious detail about the telescoping of eighteen years into eighteen days. It is at least possible that this refers to a "foreign" calendar introduced by Nestorian Christians. The confusion, resentment, and even terror that arise from a change of calendar, regarded as a trespass on the sanctity of time, can be illustrated by the popular resistance to the introduction of a reformed calendar in eighteenth-century Europe; while the story as I heard it was pointed with a very significant allusion to the "curse" on the career of Yüan Shih-k'ai, after the proclamation in China, following the

[1] Owen Lattimore, 'The Desert Road to Turkestan.'

Revolution of 1911, of the Western solar calendar, replacing the lunar calendar familiar to both Chinese and Mongols. Another illustration may be drawn from the fact that the Mongols themselves anciently used a lunar calendar varying in a few details from the Chinese standard; the Manchus regarded this with peculiar repugnance, and endeavoured to place it under a ban.[1]

I believe however that the city of the Ruins of Nine Temples has an importance transcending the handful of legendary details that I have been able to gather; an importance directly related both to the Nestorian crosses, which are the strongest kind of evidence of an important alien influence intervening between Mongols and Chinese, and to the frontier walls which, although so little studied, are undoubtedly of the highest importance in the history of Inner Mongolia. One of these walls runs east and west through Olanchab League, passing not far north of the Shiretu Jo temple domain.[2] It seems to follow approximately the "height of land" of the Inner Mongolian plateau, between the depression of the Gobi on the north and the plateau escarpment on the south. Owing to the height of the land, and to the extra height of the wall itself, it is usually swept free of snow all through the winter, and for this reason it is commonly used as a caravan road. Through the decay of centuries the wall has in fact been smoothed away until it resembles a grass-grown road with a rather high, rounded crown. The Mongols call it the Kharem-in Jam, or Road of the Wall, and it has of late years been much used by the motor trucks used in the opium-running trade under the control of the Chinese military. The opium is brought in from Kansu province by camel caravan, passing to the north of the Ordos deserts and the Yellow River Loop. At Pailingmiao it is turned over to the trucks. Part is then run down to Kweihwa, but most of it is taken on to Kalgan. By using the Road of the Wall, which runs through Mongol territory and is therefore free of Chinese bandits, the risk is minimized. When the trucks reach a point north of Kalgan, they turn south along the old Urga–Kalgan caravan road, making the shortest possible dash through the bandit zone between Mongol territory and territory firmly patrolled by the Chinese troops. The Mongols levy a tax on the opium trucks, for allowing them to run through Mongol territory. North of this wall there is another, designed apparently to defend the northern edge of the Inner Mongolian plateau, where the dip toward the Gobi begins; north of the Gobi, again, rise the grasslands of Outer Mongolia. The Nestorian city of the Ruins of Nine Temples stands between these two walls. Far to the east of the city, near the frontier between the Leagues of Olanchab and Silingol, the two walls actually cross each other at an angle—unless the crossing wall is a separate defence work; a possibility which I have not yet verified by observation.

The general subject of these outer frontier walls is a matter for separate discussion. The point which I wish to make here is that this Nestorian city, in its relation to the frontier walls, confirms one of the major aspects of the history of the Great Wall frontier. The Great Wall itself is not in fact a *linear* frontier: it is merely the most important delimitation of what is in fact a *zonal*

[1] 'Ta Ch'ing Hui Tien,' or 'Institutes of the Manchu Dynasty' (edition of 1818), under the sections dealing with the Li Fan Yuan, the Board which supervised Mongol affairs.

[2] Owen Lattimore, 'The Desert Road to Turkestan.'

frontier, of which there are also other, minor delimitations. Apart from the fact that there are important variations even in the main line of the Great Wall, there is a whole system of small "outwork" walls, running all through Inner Mongolia, from Chinese Turkistan in the extreme west to Manchuria in the east. Important work on them has been done by Sir Aurel Stein in the extreme west and in the Edsin Gol region, and more extensive work in the Edsin Gol region has recently been done by Folke Bergmann of Dr. Sven Hedin's expedition. In the east and centre, as yet, no work has been done to determine even the complete topographical outline, age-levels, dynastic affiliations, periods of rebuilding, and so forth. This much however can already be postulated. The various "outwork" systems, north of "the" Great Wall, in some sense represent tidal marks in the alternating pressures of nomad peoples on the north and the agricultural Chinese on the south. It is easy to interpret them as marking the different levels at which the Chinese have confronted the Mongols—or people equivalent to the Mongols in historical function; like the Hsiungnu, Central Asian Turks, Khitans, Nüchen or Juchen Tatars, and Manchus. This however is an over-simplified interpretation. Along the lines of these walls there have, in fact, recurrently appeared marginal or zonal peoples, the political equivalents of the zonal rather than linear geographical frontier.

The function of such peoples was to fill in the gap between true agricultural Chinese and true pastoral, tribal, "barbarian" Mongols, which otherwise would have been too awkwardly abrupt. They must have been, in culture, partly farming and partly pastoral peoples, partly merchants and town dwellers and partly warriors, in some sense "nations" and in some sense tribes. Ethnically, as well as culturally, they must have been recruited from both main divisions, the barbarian and the civilized. Politically, and for military purposes, they were adapted to serve either as agents of imperial expansion from within China or as auxiliaries of conquest from Mongolia. I believe myself that on the average they worked in favour of the trans-frontier rather than the cis-frontier; but that is a matter of detail. Functionally, they were competent in either direction, as is proved by the example of, for instance, the Tumet Mongols, who under the Ming Dynasty at one time raided as far as Peiping, who later became a kind of subsidized "frontier wardens" of the Ming dynasty, and who on the fall of the dynasty transferred their allegiance to the Manchus. At one time moreover they nearly became the dominant power in Central Inner Mongolia.[1] The Onguts can only have been such a people. Their Nestorian religion was one element in the mixed culture necessary to their intermediate position. They held the rich Kweihwa plain—which must then have been a granary, as it is now—and extended northward into the Inner Mongolian plateau, where their territory was probably delimited by the walls which can still be traced. Undoubtedly these walls existed, at least in part, before their time, and had served the purposes of similar marginal peoples in earlier times. With grain-lands in the south and access to tribal lands in the north, they had the same natural advantage in the caravan trade that the Kweihwa territory has at the present day.

[1] See Owen Lattimore, 'The Mongols of Manchuria'; also J. F. Baddeley, 'Russia, Mongolia, China.'

"The people get their living," says Marco Polo, in describing this region, "by their cattle and tillage, as well as by trade and handicraft," and he adds that "here also is what *we* call the country of Gog and Magog; *they*, however, call it Ung and Mungul" (Ongut and Mongol, that is) "after the names of two races of people," and so forth. Whether the reference to Gog and Magog can be stretched into an allusion to frontier walls, as Yule believed, or whether it is merely Polo's own interpretation of Ongut and Mongol, is really of minor importance. The significance of Polo's description of the province of Tenduc is in the references to mixed and marginal peoples; we know for ourselves that where such peoples are found in the history of the Great Wall frontier, their territories can be identified with outer walls. "The rule of the province," Marco Polo, "is in the hands of the Christians . . . but there are also plenty of Idolaters and worshippers of Mohammet . . . and there is also here a class of people called *Argons* . . . or, in other words, sprung from two different races: to wit, of the race of the Idolaters of Tenduc and of that of the worshippers of Mohammet. . . . You find throughout those seven days' journey plenty of towns and villages, the inhabitants of which are Mohammetans, but with a mixture also of Idolaters and Nestorian Christians. They get their living by trade and manufactures."[1]

It has been pointed out already that both Islam and Nestorian Christianity must have reached this region before the rise of the Mongols. In other words, Polo's description not only fits the Ongut people and their country; it applies, generally, to a *type* of people and a *typical* region; and the importance of both people and region is that they were standard phenomena of the age-old frontier. The political importance of the Ongut was in their position between the Mongol Empire in China and the tribal lands in which the Mongol power had originated. There developed, after the active period of the Mongol conquests, a recognizable lack of cordiality (which can be traced in the quarrels over dynastic succession) between the Mongols of the farther north, who considered themselves both heirs and guardians of the true Mongol tradition, and the Mongols who had moved inward on China to hold frontier cantonments and interior garrisons, and to live off the revenues of conquest, finding their careers at court or in administrative appointments rather than in fresh conquests. The shadow of this ancient dislike still lies between Inner and Outer Mongolia, the heirs of these two major Mongol divisions, although both territorially and tribally Inner and Outer Mongolia have altered considerably from what they were when Outer Mongolia was the womb of all the Mongol conquests and Inner Mongolia the cantonment-zone which buttressed the Mongol Empire in China.

In those days there was always a certain danger of dynastic quarrels, not only over the question of succession to the throne in China, but over the question of whether the Mongol Emperor in China should also be recognized as truly paramount over the Mongols of Outer Mongolia, whose chiefs were also descended from the House of Chingghis. Peoples like the Ongut, whose interests did not wholly coincide with those of the Mongols in Mongolia, but did coincide with those of the ruling house in China, had therefore an impor-

[1] Sir Henry Yule, 'The Book of Ser Marco Polo,' ed. Henri Gordier, 3rd edition, London, 1921.

tant insulating function. Their most direct interest lay in maintaining the balance of power, and with it the existing order. Revolt against the Mongols within China was obviously to their disadvantage; but an Outer Mongolian challenge to the paramount authority of the Mongols established within China was also inimical to their middle position. Racial mixture was an important, and probably an essential, factor in the historical activities of marginal peoples of this kind. Several tribes of the present day still have this character: notably the Ordos Mongols, the Tumets—both those of the Kweihwa region and those of Jehol province—and the Kharchins. Such tribes are not only "Inner Mongolian" but within Inner Mongolia belong specifically to the southern or Chinese border, rather than the northern or Outer Mongolian border.

In the case of the Onguts it is probable that the Nestorian religion connoted a certain amount of Turkish blood. They may have been linked, tribally, with the Uighurs, who in turn were probably a marginal people intermediate between Western Mongols and Central Asian Turks. The Uighurs were probably the western equivalent of the still-surviving Daghors of Manchuria in the east, who are a fusion of Eastern Mongols and Manchu-Tungus. It is still a Mongol tradition that when Chingghis conquered the Uighurs, in the course of uniting all the Mongol tribes, he broke them up and distributed them among the various Mongol tribes, in order to make use of their superior sophistication, and especially of the fact that they had a written language—which the Mongols did not yet ha
they finally adopted an alphabet modelled on the Uighur script. This made the Uighurs, whose language was related to that of the Mongols, especially valuable as scribes and civil servants. It is said that the name Oigor or Uighur still survives, as a clan name, among the Ordos Mongols.

The possible combinations and recombinations of mixed blood and mixed cultures are illimitable. It can hardly be doubted that Lama Buddhism was influenced by Nestorian Christianity, and also by Manichaeism and other religions which, after being brought into Chinese Turkistan, radiated afresh into Tibet, Western China, and Mongolia. In the same way, it may be postulated that there is some blood-continuity between the Onguts of the thirteenth century and the Tumet Mongols who later held the Kweihwa plain and the frontal escarpment of the Inner Mongolian plateau. Above all, the evidence of important Nestorian influences, both in the Kweihwa plain and on the plateau more than 100 miles to the north, indicates that the people who lived under this religion were not a minority group, but had something of the stature of a nation. The juxtaposition of Nestorian and Chinese monuments, and the mention by Marco Polo of Moslem and "half-breed" communities, is evidence enough of their mixed culture. The inclusion, within their orbit, of both grazing grounds and farming land is evidence of their mixed economy. The delimitation of their territory by the main Great Wall (south of the Kweihwa plain) on the south and by outer frontier walls on the north is evidence of an intermediate political position.

In the circumstances perhaps the most likely interpretation of the standing of the old Nestorian city now called the Ruins of Nine Temples is that it was the "northern capital" of the Ongut people, corresponding to a "southern capital" (the city of Tenduc) in the Kweihwa plain. Such double capitals are

a standard phenomenon in the history of every dynasty and minor state based on "barbarian" conquests in China. The Khitans, the Nüchen or Juchen Tatars, the Mongols themselves, all had southern capitals in China and northern capitals north of the Great Wall. Under the Manchu dynasty Mukden long maintained its importance as a northern capital, although partly displaced by a new summer capital north of the Great Wall at Chengteh or Jehol City. The northern capital regularly served to keep up the connection between the dominant power and the sources of its military ascendancy beyond the Great Wall, while the southern capital was the administrative headquarters for the control and exploitation of the dominated territory within China. The parallel, in the case of a minor state like that of the Onguts, was in a northern focus maintaining its tribal connections, and a southern focus maintaining the privileged position of a people who were "wardens of the marches" of the Great Wall. Even purely Chinese dynasties like that of the Ming, coming between Mongols and Manchus, whose first capital was at Nanking, on the Yangtze, have always tended to acknowledge the strategic importance of the Great Wall frontier by setting up an administrative capital in the north, at Peiping or at some strategic point in Honan, such as K'aifeng; even though the lower Yangtze valley continued to maintain its importance as the centre of culture and civilization. The persistence of the tendency can still be seen in the dualism of a kind of unofficial northern capital at Peiping, and a national capital at Nanking.

Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from all this is that Mongol history, as well as Mongol geography, is a complex problem, not to be so simply treated as has been usual in the century and a half since sea power became dominant in the affairs of the Far East. We cannot discuss "the" Great Wall, but must take into account a whole zone. We are not entitled to assume a "desert" Mongolia and a "fertile" China. Nor may we write history in terms of Mongols who are all tribal nomads and barbarians, in contrast with Chinese who are all peasants or townsmen and all civilized. Quite on the contrary: the multiplicity of gradations and variations is astonishing, and the interwoven pattern of geographical and historical correspondences much richer than is commonly supposed. Because Mongol history has been more or less dormant ever since the seventeenth, or at least the eighteenth, century, there has been little to offset the tendency to over-simplify it and reduce it to a mere chronicle of barbarism. In our own time however the penetration of Russian influence among the Mongols from the north, and more lately the extension of Japanese influence from the east, are hints that new combinations in political geography are to be expected, co-ordinated with physical and strategic zones; and with them new creations in intermediate cultures. The geographical frontier zone and the "marginal" nation are likely to be as important again as they were when Yisun Sume-in Tor, the Ruins of Nine Temples, was a city alive and thronged; when men in Chinese silks, who spoke a Mongol or Turkish language, attended Nestorian Christian services in churches of which nothing now remains except a few crosses on stone, a few amulets in bronze, a few reminiscences in legend, and perhaps a few distorted echoes in the liturgies of Lama-Buddhism.